



# Time on My Hands

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## **Time on My Hands** Peter Delacorte

While in Paris, Gabriel Prince, a somewhat jaded but charming writer of high-end travel guides, is offered the chance of a lifetime -- a trip through time. There's only one hitch: the left-wing owner of the time machine, quantum physicist Jasper Hudnut, wants Gabriel to perform an errand. Gabriel must go back to pre-World War II Hollywood -- a time when Howard Hawks was in his prime and Humphrey Bogart was still waiting for his break -- and somehow derail a young contract actor named Ronald "Dutch" Reagan from his track to the Oval Office. When signing on for the trip, Gabriel couldn't have imagined the strange turns his life would take. He wouldn't have guessed he'd fall in love with a starlet, or that after landing a job as a screenwriter at Warner Bros., he'd discreetly plunder the future for script ideas. And he certainly couldn't have guessed he'd become friends with Dutch Reagan.

Gabriel learns quickly that altering history isn't as easy as it looks -- especially when he must stay ahead of several sinister characters from the future. Yet, despite numerous decade-tripping detours, Gabriel still has time on his hands -- time to discover what the world would be like had Reagan never been President, and whether or not his own future should ultimately reside in the past.

## **Time on My Hands Details**

Date : Published September 1st 1998 by Scribner Book Company (first published 1997)

ISBN : 9780671023249

Author : Peter Delacorte

Format : Paperback 400 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Time Travel, Fiction, Alternate History, Science Fiction Fantasy, Fantasy

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# From Reader Review Time on My Hands for online ebook

## carriedaway says

I like that Peter Delacorte has a vocabulary that he's not afraid to mine. The book's from the first person perspective of Gabriel Prince, a 43 year old Princeton grad (so important to the narrator that he can't pretend he was a poseur claiming to be a Princetonian even when it's killing his cover story) who has fallen into a somewhat knockabout existence writing travel books, just jilted by a Montreal rebel intellectual some 20ish years his junior when he meets Jasper Hudnut, an enigmatic engineer with a proposition for him. Go back in time and divert Ronald Reagan from becoming President of the United States.

Hokay. Arguably, if I went back to the 1930's, I'd be more inclined to divert Hitler, a point that Gabriel addresses, but not to my satisfaction. But was the mission he was charged with when he went into the past and he's there after all, so it *is* the honorable thing to do.

(view spoiler)

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## Judi says

I'm trying to ignore all the questions I have about why the protagonist would undertake the task -- I mean, if you're going back in time to eliminate (by death or other means) someone from power, why Ronald Reagan? Why not Hitler or Idi Amin? The protagonist certainly has hubris to undertake a mission that would change the world.

Anyway, I still enjoyed the story, the historical Hollywood setting, the little twists and turns. I thought Delacorte's writing was quite enjoyable.

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## Michael Petrie says

Enjoyed this story. From Paris to L.A. with a completely different take on time travel ... not at all science fiction. Just a fun romp thru time ... back to a California before MY time ... and a Ronald Reagan who was just an actor, not yet a politician. I liked the story, the writer's style, his use of language, and the humor.

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### **Jamie says**

Even though I am a big fan of Ronald Reagan, I could not help liking this book, the central premise of which involves preventing "Ronaldus Magnus" from becoming President of the United States.

Well-written and illustrated with historical photographs, this time travel novel is quite intriguing, with several narrative twists that keep you wondering what will happen next.

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### **George says**

Hard to peg this book. It was a time travel/love story/let's stop Reagan from becoming president story. It is a preposterous tale and, I wouldn't think that I would like it, but I did. It just had a certain charm and the old Hollywood era was interesting and.... I'm a bit of a sucker for love stories and they kept the time travel pretty simple and didn't try to explain how it works (always tricky). Nothing profound but it kept my attention, had some unexpected turns and..... I would probably give it 3 1/2 stars but I can't figure out how to do that (if it's possible), so I'll err on the side of generosity and who wouldn't travel back in time to find their true love.

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### **Jon Spoelstra says**

This is one of my all-time favorite reads. You'll have a blast as a time machine takes you back to Hollywood when Ronald Reagan was a struggling B-actor. There's a mystery, there's suspense, there's foreign intrigue and you will wish that Delacorte had written a sequel. You can buy a used copy for just a penny (plus postage) on Amazon.com or get in on Kindle. [www.Geezer-Lit.com](http://www.Geezer-Lit.com).

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### **Natasha says**

Time travel + Hollywood + engaging writing = a thoroughly enjoyable read. With, unfortunately, a thoroughly dissatisfying ending.

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### **Lainie says**

This is one time travel book that was engaging and just plain fun to read! And it was not science fiction-y.

It's easy to posit going back in time to eliminate Hitler before he grew up. It's not that common to suggest we might have benefited if someone could go back in time to divert the young Hollywood contract actor "Dutch" Reagan from his path to the Presidency. The author's depiction of the studio system and 1939 Malibu carried this reader into that world, and the iterations of time travel--and corresponding effects of the narrator's actions--seemed to hold together, even if the exposition was a tiny bit labored at times. The story starts as an adventure and turns into a sweet and memorable romance. Recommended.

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## Kressel Housman says

Perhaps I should be embarrassed to admit that I enjoyed this fluff, but I did. It's a time travel adventure and romance set in post-WWII Hollywood. The time traveler's mission is a little flimsy if you ask me: he's out to make sure that Ronald Reagan never enters politics. If I had a time machine, that wouldn't top my list of historical events to change, but even still, this was a fun journey into old Hollywood. While our time traveler befriends Reagan and plots his course of action, he rubs shoulders with other famous people who hadn't made it yet and falls in love with an actress who never made it to stardom because she died in a car crash. Then, his mission becomes not just to block Reagan's political career, but to keep her alive and maybe even make her a star.

I was no fan of the Reagan Administration - the Iran/contra scandal, the voodoo economics, or the policies that caused the homeless crisis in NYC - but I completely disagree with the author that 8 years of Carter, followed by 8 years of Mondale, would have made the world a better place. So "eh" to the political analysis, but "yay" to the characters and plot. I was so absorbed, I read right through my subway stop, had to switch to a train going in the opposite direction, and then read through my stop again! Now THAT's an addictive book. So if you're looking for a fun time but not necessarily a deep read, try and get hold of this book.

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## Richard Derus says

Rating: 4\* of five

**The Book Report:** Jasper Hudnut is, indeed, a nut. He tells travel writer Gabriel Prince, a footloose and fancy-free political semi-exile from their mutual homeland of the USA as perverted by Ronald Reagan, that he has a time machine, a lot of money, and a proposition for him: Kill Reagan before WWII and the death of his liberal ideas makes him into the nightmare president he turned out to be.

Hudnut, 72, can't do it...what if it takes years to accomplish in the past? Who wants 1930s health care as an oldster? Plus he gets monster headaches if he so much as moves back to last week...but he really wants it done, and he'll make Gabriel a rich man for doing it.

Hell, I'll do it for free!

But of course, this being fiction, nothing goes according to plan. It all begins with Gabriel falling in love (women always ruin everything) with Jasper's niece Lorna, an actress who died in a mudslide on the way to Malibu one night in 1938. Gabriel can't let this happen, of course! So he prevents it.

Then there's Reagan himself. Gabriel **LIKES** the guy! He's genuine, he's sweet, he's not yet a closed-minded conservative...how can he make himself kill the Boy Next Door?

He does. Things in the future change. No one can step in the same river twice. And, since the time machine was sort of borrowed from parties unknown by old Hudnut, now Gabriel has an angry owner with a secret to worry about evading.

I'd still love to be Gabriel Prince. Oh my yes. The ending of this novel makes me want to be him quite badly. The weaving together of the strands of the story, the seemingly random found photos from the period, the threads not quite woven back in, are harmonized and made relevant. It's a very good piece of work.

**My Review:** I love alternative histories, and I love anything that goes against the prevailing political conservative orthodoxy, and I detested Reagan from my early youth (lived in California, parents politically to the right of Attila the Hun, met the Guvnor and as a kid thought he was boring). This novel, then, is tailor made for each and every one of my quirks. It should have made me warble with joy and yodel my rapture from the housetops.

That, in case you weren't paying attention, is what I'm doing now.

More to a review's point, though, are discussions of the merits of the book or lack thereof. Delacorte hasn't written a perfect book, but it's got the required stuff covered: Believable motivations, plausible explanations for the actions of the time machine, realistic extrapolations of the effects of Gabriel's meddling, and the door left open for a sequel.

Which has never happened. Damn.

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### **Suzanne says**

I love to read time travel books, and that is probably why I finished this book, which otherwise did not much hold my interest. It's the story of a man who gets access to a time travel machine, and on the suggestion of the previous holder of the machine, goes back in time with the goal of preventing Ronald Reagan from becoming president. The problem is that I don't buy the main character's motivation at all. He doesn't really seem to care passionately about his goal, and his plans for making it come true, back in 1938, where Reagan is a small time actor, are kind of strange---create a big role for him so he becomes a famous actor? Why would that automatically work to keep him from becoming president? The book deals with time travel paradoxes by pretty much just ignoring them, or saying that they somehow automatically work themselves out. The writing is uninspired. Every plot element seems to be written about several times, first when it happens, and then again by explaining it to another character. The ending is completely disappointing and non-conclusive.

So why even three stars? Well, there aren't that many time travel novels out there, and this one at least tried. I did have some interest in the romance contained here, and a few details were neat---for example, lists of what the main character bought in 1938 and how little it all cost. It was a book that tried, and I do give it credit for that.

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### **Deborah Katz says**

It's impossible to explain to people why I like this book without sounding retarded.

"So this guy has a time-travel machine and he needs to stop Regan from becoming president and it's in LA before there are freeways, and he falls in love with this chick, and the food is bad; no one has good ingredients; there's no Whole Foods on Fairfax, yeah, I know! And he jumps back and forth and goes to

Catalina, and then Reagan says..."

Yeah, when I get to "time travel machine" and "Then Reagan says..." I think people tune out.

But it's so oddly engaging! And the premise is so ludicrous! And every meal this guy eats in the city is so awful!

Look, even before I moved to LA I was obsessed with books that took place in and around this city, starting with *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. So on that alone I love this book for its honesty as much as I hated the Huneeus book for its bullshit perspective of LA.

But apart from that...it's time travel to stop Reagan from becoming president! So deliciously fantastic!!!

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### **Lynn says**

As a reader who loves both movies of the 40s and a good time-travel yarn, I was really looking forward to this one!

Unfortunately, I don't think Delacorte's skills as a writer matched his concepts in this one. I found Gabriel's almost immediate acceptance of the notion of time travel when he was approached by Jasper to be asking me to suspend MY disbelief far too readily. And similarly, there were just too many 'holes' in the portrayal of other characters.... I don't expect Shakespeare from a SF writer... but at least some believability in the major characters would have been nice!!!

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### **tENTATIVELY, cONVENIENCE says**

review of

Peter Delacorte's *Time on my Hands*

by tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE - March 16, 2015

My last review was of Jackson Mac Low's *42 Merzgedichte in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters* so I read this bk as a break from 'heavier' material for fun & it WAS fun although I wanted a happy ending. All I want anymore is a happy ending. Is that too much to ask for?

I've never heard of the author, I acquired this bk b/c it's about a time traveler whose purpose is to prevent Ronald Reagan from becoming president. That was funny enuf to grab my attn. An unexpected plus was that it also has a fair amt of aesthetic influence rooted in romantic comedies made by Hollywood in the 1930s - specifically referencing Howard Hawks' "Bringing Up Baby", a personal favorite.

I've previously expressed my observation that time travel novels are convenient for introducing historical research (see my review entitled "The Ship That Hurt When It Peed In The Time Stream": <https://www.goodreads.com/story/show/...> ) & that's a part of the delight of reading them. The other part of the delight of reading them is that the author can introduce whatever else they want to since the time traveling allows the inclusion of elements that wd be out-of-place in a 'realistic' novel. Delacorte engaged me w/ all sorts of details:

"On the main floor one is invited to weigh oneself on a scale that is connected to a laughably out-of-date computer/printer. One may then discover, by pressing the requisite buttons, how much he would have weighed in various European cities four hundred years ago, when each had a different notion of what a "pound" was. Thus you may have weighed 150 in Bologna, but 175 in Berlin. The point is to show how much clearer things have become by virtue of standardization, of the metric system. But one gets the impression, holding the faint dot-matrix printout, that the Musée des Techniques is more than a little wistful about progress." - p 18

"I searched briefly for olive oil, was about to note the curiosity of its absence when I realized it wouldn't become a mainstream American consumer product for several decades." - p 111

An acquaintance who's more than 20 yrs younger than me & who was, therefore, only a child during the Reagan presidency, sd to me sometime in the past few yrs something about Reagan being a good president who didn't do much harm. That was one of those perceptions that reminded me of how effective it is to put a smiley-face on whatever to make it seem like nothing's going on underneath - instant whitewashing of covert operations.

""Good. Tell, if you would, how you voted in the presidential elections of 1980 through '88."

"I had to calculate for a moment. "Carter," I said. "Then Mondale, then Dukakis."

"Hudnut took a small drink from his enormous mug of beer. "If you had to sum up the presidency of Ronald Reagan in a few words," he said, "how would you do it?"

""How few?"

""Twenty seconds' worth."

""Well, I suppose I'd quote François Mitterand. he and Pierre Trudeau were meeting with Reagan. God knows what year, God knows what occasion, and Reagan told Mitterand some daffy anecdote, some fantasy from his past. And afterward Mitterand, who was of course nearly as old as Reagan but quite a bit more together, came up to Trudeau and said, 'What *planet* is that man from?' "" - p 21

Of course, one cd say that Mitterand's even using the expression "What *planet* is that man from?" is *also* a fantasy &, thusly, also suspect in such a serious political context. Delacorte has his characters give much more practical summaries of Reagan's insidiousness later on:

""Look if ever there was a world-leader who wasn't self-generated it was Reagan. The man was a shell, a charming automaton with lots of rich, nasty people standing over him, pulling the strings."

"Hudnut's grin disappeared. "Then who did generate all that vulgarity, all that hypocrisy, all that banality, that occurred between 1980 and 1988?"

""All of Reagan's friends," I said, surprised at the rancor in my own voice. "All the greedy, plutocratic sociopaths who were really running the country when Reagan was president."" - p 55

""Gabriel, please think about this. Fine, possibly some conservative republican would have defeated Carter. Maybe a career politician. Maybe a game-show host. Maybe a baseball player. Who knows? But in the



darkest Mephistophelian right-wing fantasy could you *imagine* what Reagan brought upon us? James Watt. Edwin Meese. Elliot Abrams. All those horrible, incompetent people he nominated to the Supreme Court. The Contras. Iran-Contra. Oliver North. The welfare Cadillac anecdote, over and over. Visiting the SS cemetery in Bitburg. Star Wars. Trickle-down economics. The national debt goes up by a gazillion percent, and the taxpayers have to come up with God knows how many billions because those crooks deregulated the savings and loans. Sending a goddamn army to invade a Caribbean island smaller than this room!" - p 57

I cdn't've sd it better. How many people a generation younger than myself even realize that Reagan's government invaded Grenada on October 25, 1983? The way I remember it is that Reagan initially referred to the military action as an "invasion" but shortly thereafter back-pedaled to try to make it seem that it wasn't really an invasion after all.

I'm an anarchist & don't usually vote. The 1st time I voted was in 1984 in an attempt to get Reagan out of office. You can read a little more about political activism around that that I was involved w/ in this entry: "Halloween Demonstration Against Reagan - near the White House, Washington DC, us@ - October 31 (Halloween Day), 1984, 10:30AM - 1PM" here: <http://idioideo.pleintekst.nl/MereOut...> & see the Reagan Halloween Monster Mask that organizer Doug Retzler made for the occasion. I voted then too b/c it was the 1st time a woman was running for Vice President. It wasn't that I expected Reagan's competition to be all that great either, I was just desperate to get rid of him. At the time I felt like if *even I voted* that there must be millions more who wd vote similarly. When Reagan won AGAIN, *groan*, I started wondering if the election was fixed.

When Reagan became president in the 1st place I was astounded. An actor for president?! It seemed so transparent it was ridiculous. He was a puppet president, the stupidest president I'd seen yet. By 1984 the country seemed so insane to me that a revolution seemed almost 'inevitable'.

I often say that the South finally won the Civil War when John F. Kennedy was assassinated & Lyndon B. Johnson, a man from Texas, became president. Then I say that the Bush administration really started in 1980 w/ Reagan & didn't end until 2008 when Obama was elected. The 2nd time I voted was in 2004, for Kerry. I was hoping to get rid of Bush & help end that reign. No such luck. Then I voted for Obama to at least try to get a 'black' man into the presidency. Of course, given that his mom's 'white', Obama shd more properly be called 'grey'. I didn't have any great expectations from him either, I just saw it as switching from Black & White TV to Color, right? Time to move on to the 21st century, eh? Obama's presidency has been a nightmare for me as the wild-world-of-governmental-intrusion-into-the-citizen's-life has made mine much worse than it already was in the form of the totally dysfunctional & invasive NOT-Affordable-Health-Care-Act. I won't be voting again. I certainly won't vote for Hilary Clinton just b/c she's a woman.

Time Travel stories are often concerned w/ 2 things: 1. exploring history, 2. changing history.

"I had experienced a little chill imagining myself cutting out young Hitler's tongue. I said, "I suppose I should be clear about something. Are we talking about hypothetical situations, or are we talking about something you expect me to *do*?"

""The latter," Hudnut replied.

""Because I'm not going to kill anybody," I said. "I think it might in fact be an excellent idea for someone to go back in time and eliminate Hitler, or Stalin, or any number of people, but I'm not the guy."

""You're way off base, Gabriel."

"I created a quick list of other possibilities: Joseph McCarthy, J. Edgar Hoover, Richard Nixon, Charles Manson, Lawrence Welk, Oliver Stone. *Anything that would alter the course of history*. I said, "We're obviously not thinking along the same lines." - pp 54-55

The main character, Gabriel, 's list of possibilities for assassination becomes more & more fanciful & comedic when he gets to Lawrence Welk, a man primarily 'guilty' of influencing mainstream culture in an insipid way. But "Olive Stone"?! A somewhat political, somewhat 'leftist', mainstream filmmaker? I'm not sure I get that one.

The possibility of changing history is usually where the drama comes in since changing the time traveler's history might mean winking the traveler out of existence. Delacorte has this changing happen, at least initially, in a more casual, & less threatening way:

"The jump cut, indeed. I, in combination with the machine I was sitting upon, had served as Hudnut's film editor. I had deleted twenty-four minutes from his life and spliced in this new present without so much as a dissolve. And, to my growing delight, I seemed to understand what was happening. "I've actually changed history," I said." - p 32

Traveling into the past has the perq of 'foreknowledge': the traveler can take advantage of knowledge of things-to-come & exploit them. The time traveler in this story can gamble on horse races & make a fortune:

"With a copy of tomorrow's sports section in my pocket and forty dollars in my wallet, I drove the Porsche to Santa Anita. I was there in time for the fourth race, which would be won by thirty-to-one Portsider. I bet four dollars on the favorite, Clem's Gal, to show. Clem's Gal finished third, as I knew she would, and paid \$2.40. I picked up my \$4.80 at the window, bet two dollars to win on Dangerous Ned in the fifth, and bought myself a Polish sausage and a cup of Budweiser. The sausage was grilled, quite decently cooked, and with a fair amount of spicy brown mustard but it was not bad." - pp 45-46

In the 1970s I had a friend who was a gambling addict who'd pay for me to take a bus to a horse race track, pay for a minimal lunch there, & give me money to systematically bet on the horses for him. I was supposed to get a share the winnings. He never won. I remember many things about this, perhaps 2 wk long, experience: the apparent cruising of John Waters star David Lochary, the Men's Room attendants who required tipping, the general down-&-outness of the betters, & *the incredibly bad food*. Since my friend, the gambler, was a cheapskate to me, I only had a few dollars for lunch & that was spent on a ridiculously overpriced burger that literally tasted like cardboard. Was there any actual meat in it?

By 1997, when this bk was 1st published, there was already a long history of time travel stories. I usually think of H. G. Wells' The Time Machine (1895) as a classic of the genre but there're many earlier examples. Having read many of them, I'm usually alert for new spins:

"["]Let's imagine these machines come from—pick a number—three hundred years in the future. Let's say the operator can only go back a certain number of years. . . . Maybe it's analogous to deep-sea diving. Maybe if you go back more than—pick a number—seventy years, it's like diving too deep and risking the bends." - p 53

Delacorte named Part IV "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu" after Marcel Proust's famous literary magnum opus. Fair enuf.

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## **Jan says**

Wow, I haven't read such an entertaining book in a long time! I love the possibilities and paradoxes of time travel, and the way it was presented here was just top notch. The story was sometimes funny, always crazy, but not so crazy that I couldn't "go with it." The story took place in southern California in lots of familiar places, including Catalina Island in 1938. I used to live on Catalina, off and on between 1967-1984, so that part was a real blast. This novel even has pictures! And I loved the ending! Well, almost. I can't say any more, except if you can find a copy, read it!

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